

# EASTERN CAMBRIDGE PLANNING STUDY

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CITY OF CAMBRIDGE



CAMBRIDGE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT  
EASTERN CAMBRIDGE PLANNING STUDY COMMITTEE

OCTOBER 2001



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## CONSULTANT TEAM

Goody, Clancy & Associates, *Land Use, Planning and Urban Design*  
TAMS Consultants, *Transportation Planning and Traffic Engineering*  
Byrne McKinney & Associates, *Real Estate Analysis and Housing*  
Economics Research Associates, *Economic Development*  
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## ***Background***

### **RECENT DEVELOPMENT AND THE MORATORIUM**

The City of Cambridge has experienced sustained economic growth over the past decade, resulting in significant real estate development pressures throughout the City. The eastern portion of the City in particular has been the subject of numerous large development proposals. In September of 1997, the City embarked upon an historic effort to develop Citywide Growth Management policies and zoning recommendations. This process culminated in the Citywide Rezoning Petition, approved by the City Council in February 2001. The City Council delayed action on the Citywide Rezoning Petition proposals for Eastern Cambridge pending the recommendations of the Eastern Cambridge Planning Study (ECaPS).

# Overview

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During the Citywide Growth Management process, the rapid pace of development in Eastern Cambridge prompted neighborhood residents to seek immediate action. In November 1999, Cambridge citizens submitted the Larkin Petition requesting the City Council to impose an 18-month moratorium on all new commercial development over 20,000 square feet and new residential development over 20 units within a defined portion of Eastern Cambridge. The primary concerns expressed in the petition were the encroachment of commercial development into residential neighborhoods, increasing traffic congestion, real estate price escalation, and inadequate public open space.

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The City Council approved an eighteen-month moratorium beginning in January 2000. The City Manager, Robert W. Healy, appointed an Eastern Cambridge Planning Study Committee and charged the group with the task of using this time “to ascertain what the appropriate zoning and other City policies in the Moratorium Area should be to protect the residents’ quality of life and maintain neighborhood stability.” After a competitive selection process, a multi-disciplinary consultant team led by Goody, Clancy & Associates was selected to assist with the Eastern Cambridge Planning Study. Working closely with the Committee and City staff, the consultant team developed recommendations for land use, zoning, urban design, open space, transportation, and retail. This report documents the findings and recommendations of the Eastern Cambridge Planning Study, developed over the course of a year from June 2000 to June 2001.

**EASTERN CAMBRIDGE STUDY AREA**

The Eastern Cambridge Study Area is bounded to the west by Windsor Street, to the north by the Cambridge/Somerville boundary, to the east by the Charles River and First Street, and to the south by Main Street. The area is a major gateway from downtown Boston into Cambridge. The Study Area includes portions of four Cambridge neighborhoods: East Cambridge, Wellington-Harrington, Area IV and MIT. To a great extent, the area’s special character is derived from its industrial history and the diversity of its neighborhoods.

**ECAPS COMMITTEE**

To guide the planning process for Eastern Cambridge, the City Manager appointed an eighteen-member committee including neighborhood residents, representatives of local businesses and institutions, and City staff. The Committee’s recommendations were shaped by a series of four public workshops and more than twenty committee meetings over the course of the project.

**CONSULTANT TEAM**

A consultant team led by Goody, Clancy and Associates was selected to assist with the planning study. The consultant team included members with expertise in urban design, land use planning, transportation planning and engineering, real estate and housing, economic development, and zoning.

***Scope of the Report***

This report includes an analysis of existing conditions in Eastern Cambridge –historical context, urban design and open space, land use and zoning, real estate market for housing, office/R&D, and retail, and transportation. A discussion of opportunities and constraints in each area follows.

The report then describes the vision and goals for the study, which were developed by the ECaPS Committee with input received from the public at community workshops.

The study recommends a set of zoning and non-zoning actions, which aim to fulfill the vision for the future of Eastern Cambridge. The ECaPS zoning recommendations were forwarded to the Planning Board in April 2001 and have served as the basis for the Planning Board’s Eastern Cambridge Rezoning Petition filed with the City Council in June 2001. Action on the petition is expected in Fall 2001. Copies of the petition and zoning as finally adopted, can be obtained from the City Clerk. The non-zoning recommendations, which are discussed in this report, include a neighborhood transportation plan, a retail strategy, and ways to address noise impacts from mechanical equipment. A suggested plan for implementation follows the various recommendations.







